

ESSAY

## Proposed Criteria for the Necessary Conditions for Shamanic Journeying Imagery

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**Abstract**—Despite renewed interest in shamanic patterns of phenomenal properties such as journeying imagery, these phenomena are neither well defined nor sufficiently understood. Consequently, we propose criteria pertaining to four necessary conditions for a visual mental image to qualify as a shamanic journeying image. Finally, we demonstrate how these necessary conditions may be used to extrapolate a scoring system that allows one to empirically test, via falsificationism, a visual mental image’s ostensible shamanic status.

*Keywords:* shamanism—shamanic journeying imagery—necessary conditions

### Introduction

Shamanism may be defined as “a body of techniques and activities that supposedly enable its practitioners to access information that is not ordinarily attainable by members of the social group that gave them privileged status” (Krippner, 2002: 962). The shaman performs a social-role function by using this information to serve the community (Walsh, 1989a). Many scholars (e.g., Eliade, 1989; Heinze, 1991; Ripinsky-Naxon, 1993) concur that altered states of consciousness (ASCs) are an integral part of shamanism, “particularly those ASCs involving *ecstatic journeying* (i.e., *soul flight* or *out-of-body experience*)” (Krippner, 2002: 966). Harner (1990) refers to ASCs experienced by these practitioners as shamanic states of consciousness. That is, shamanic techniques (e.g., listening to monotonous drumming, perceptual deprivation, ritualistic dancing, ingesting hallucinogens) are considered to facilitate purported shifts in consciousness. In other articles (e.g., Rock & Krippner, in press) we have

provided our rationale for replacing “shamanic states of consciousness” with “shamanic patterns of phenomenal properties,” and will use that wording throughout this paper.

Noll (1985) states that, “Shamanism is an ecstatic healing tradition which at its core is concerned with the techniques for inducing, maintaining, and interpreting the experience of enhanced visual mental imagery” (p. 45). Similarly, Peters (1989) writes that, “The shaman is a visualizer . . .” (p. 130) and that, “In shamanism, the key to the transpersonal is through visualization” (p. 129). Indeed, Houran, Lange, and Crist-Houran (1997) examined the phenomenology of 30 narratives pertaining to shamanic journeying experiences presented in Harner (1990) and reported that 93.3% involved some form of visual phenomena.

The shaman’s visualisations (i.e., journeying imagery) tend to be consistent with his or her learned cosmology (Krippner, 1990; Walsh, 1995, 2007), which consists of a multi-layered universe often exemplified by a “lower world” (the underworld or “land of the dead”), “upper world” (sky) and “middle world” (the terrestrial world or Earth). However, it would be an oversimplification to assume that all shamanic traditions equate the “lower world” with the land of the dead, and the “upper world” with “sky.” For example, Lepp (2004: 217–218) states that Mongolian shamans “travel to the Lower World to talk with the dead” (p. 218) but Na-hki and Moso shamans (in the Tibet area) believed that souls should “rise to heaven.”

The various worlds are held to be connected by a “central axis” that may take the form of, for example, a “world tree,” “cosmic mountain” or “world pillar” (Eliade, 1989). Walsh (1989b: 27) states that the “upper world” tends to be associated with spirit guides and teachers, while others (e.g., Kalweit, 1988) suggest that light experiences and encounters with celestial beings are common. In contrast, the “lower world” is “often a place of tests and challenges” (Walsh, 1990a: 147), where the shaman may encounter, for example, infernal rivers (Eliade, 1989) or predatory creatures (Kalweit, 1988).

Despite renewed interest in, for example, shamanic patterns of phenomenal properties such as journeying imagery (Walsh, 1989b), these phenomena are neither well defined nor sufficiently understood. It is, of course, a commonsense point that a shamanic journeying image is an image that occurs in the context of a shamanic journeying experience. Clearly, this statement is true by definition, or tautology, and is, thus, redundant. What is needed is a formal statement of the criteria for the necessary conditions for shamanic journeying imagery. Our proposed criteria are derived from a review of generally accepted examples of shamanic journeying found in the anthropological and psychological literature. That is to say, the criteria will be validated by showing that they are features of imagery that are considered by scholars (and by shamans themselves) to be shamanic. Furthermore, it will become evident that our criteria are indicative of an experientially consistent journeying experience with regards to (1) the way the images

are integrated to form a “geography” or “landscape,” (2) shamanic cosmology, (3) the purpose of the journey, and (4) the function of the journeying image.

The purpose of the present paper is to propose criteria for the necessary conditions for shamanic journeying imagery. Before proceeding, however, a qualifying statement is required. Shamanic journeying imagery is not restricted to any particular sensory modality, that is, journeying imagery may be visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile or multi-modal (Walsh, 1995). However, for the purpose of the present paper, shamanic journeying images will be delimited to their visual modality because these are arguably the most abundant (Houran et al., 1997; Noll, 1983).

We will argue that there exist four necessary conditions for a visual mental image to be deemed a shamanic journeying image:

- $N_1$ : The visual mental image,  $X$ , must be integrated with other visual mental images;
- $N_2$ : The “outward appearance” of  $X$  must be consistent with a shamanic cosmology;
- $N_3$ :  $X$  must be consistent with the purpose of the shamanic journey; and
- $N_4$ : The function of  $X$  must be consistent with  $X$ .

$N_1$ – $N_3$  were formulated *a posteriori* while  $N_4$  was constructed *a priori*. An example of an ostensible—yet ultimately nonshamanic—journeying image might be an  $X$  that satisfies, for instance,  $N_1$  (i.e., the visual mental image,  $X$ , must be integrated with other visual mental images), but fails to satisfy one or more of the remaining necessary conditions.

### **$N_1$ : $X$ Must Be Integrated With Other Visual Mental Images**

We are using the term “integrated” to emphasize that during shamanic journeying experiences various visual mental images combine to form cohesive “geographies” or “landscapes,” wherein events unfold in a sequential manner. Consequently, during journeying the shaman does not, for example, aim to cultivate—and subsequently focus on—a single visual mental image while attempting to eliminate all other thought-forms. By way of illustration, one may consider the following narrative provided by a Magar shaman detailing a journey to the “lower world” or “underworld”:

The shaman travels to a high mountain pass, and from there descends into the “underworld.” Many of the geographical names used are both real and symbolic. For example, just beyond Dhorpatan is a large stone with a natural groove around its middle. The stone is called “The Tying place of the Death sacrifice,” and as such is a symbolic road marker for the road of death. The groove is attributed to the wear of the ropes of animals which have been tied there for the “Casting-away-the-soul” sacrifice. Further on, at the mountain pass, is a dividing of watersheds. The water which runs toward the village is known as “The Waters of Remembrance,” and the water flowing the other way as “The Waters of Forgetfulness.” In retrieving the soul, it is said that if the shaman can overtake it while it is still within the Waters of Remembrance, its capture and subsequent

reinstallation is comparatively easy. If, on the other hand, the soul has reached the Waters of Forgetfulness, it will forget its home and family and wander into the underworld. (Waters; cited in Desjarlais, 1989: 291)

It is noteworthy that, in the preceding example, visual mental images such as a “large stone,” “mountain pass,” “watershed,” and a “village” are integrated to form the “geography” of the Magar shaman’s “underworld.” Consequently, these visual mental images satisfy  $N_1$ . An example of a visual mental image that doesn’t satisfy  $N_1$  is any image that is not a constituent of a coherent “geography” or “landscape.” For instance, if an individual reported a single visual mental image (e.g., a “large stone”) manifesting in a vacuum, then this would be inconsistent with  $N_1$ .

### **$N_2$ : The Outward Appearance of $X$ Must Be Consistent With a Shamanic Cosmology**

By “outward appearance” we are referring to the form or “garb” of  $X$ . For example, Strassman (2001) has speculated that entities encountered during dimethyltryptamine-induced experiences may manifest in forms (e.g., “elves,” “aliens”) recognisable to the percipient. Thus, to invoke Kant’s (1781/1933) noumenal/phenomenal distinction, one may distinguish between the entity as a thing-in-itself (i.e., the noumenon) and the entity as perceived by the percipient (i.e., the phenomenon, outward appearance, form, “garb”).

It is noteworthy that the proposed criteria for this necessary condition consist of *a* shamanic cosmology rather than merely shamanic cosmology because the latter implies an arguably erroneous universality. During a shamanic journeying experience the aspirant purportedly “travels” to “realms” or “worlds” located within the shaman’s cosmos (Walsh, 1995). While each shamanic culture has developed its own cosmology, Ellwood (1987) suggests that a shamanic cosmology tends to consist of a three-tiered universe of varying ontological status. Harner (1990) considers it instructive to divide the shaman’s universe into bipolar opposites: ordinary and non-ordinary reality. During shamanic journeying experiences the shaman purportedly accesses what is technically referred to as the “lower world” and the “upper world” (non-ordinary reality) (Doore, 1989; Walsh, 1990b, 1994). In normal waking consciousness (ordinary reality) the shaman experiences what is known as the “middle world,” which is simply one’s everyday existence on Earth (Harner, 1987). Eliade (1989) states that all three “worlds” are interconnected by a “central axis” (e.g., a “pillar,” “tree,” “mountain”). Moreover, the “upper” and “lower” worlds are believed to be multi-layered in many shamanic cultures (Walsh, 1990b). For example, Peters (1990) states that according to Tamang cosmology the universe is held to exhibit a configuration of nine “lower worlds” and nine “upper worlds.” Furthermore, six planets are understood to surround the terrestrial world in various directions. Rather than the “central axis” assuming the form of a “world pillar,” “cosmic

mountain,” or “world tree” (Eliade, 1989), the Tamang shaman utilises a “rainbow rope” that emanates from the top of the cranium (Peters, 1990).

Numerous scholars (e.g., Eliade, 1989; Kalweit, 1988; Walsh, 1989b) concur that shamanic cosmologies consist of various transcultural elements. Kalweit (1988) states that the “upper world” is a realm that is associated with experiences of light and celestial beings. Walsh (1989b: 27) asserts, “The upperworld is a place where teachers and guides may be found” and is “perhaps populated with strange animals, plants, and people.” Additionally, Shirokogoroff (1935; cited in Kalweit, 1988: 70) writes that in the cosmology of the Tungus, the “upper world” is where the “stars, the sun, the moon, and a few spirits and souls” reside.

The shaman’s “lower world” is commonly referred to as the “underworld” (Eliade, 1989) or the Land of the Dead (Kalweit, 1988), and its geography is frequently characterised as “funerary” (Eliade, 1989: 509). Indeed, the Nepali shaman habitually visit cremation grounds, the Magar shaman purportedly journeys to a graveyard (Desjarlais, 1989), and the cosmology of Tamang shamanism makes reference to “a black castle of death in the middle of a cemetery” (Peters, 1990: 78), whilst amongst the shamanism of North Asia the geography of the “underworld” contains graves decorated with inverted objects (Eliade, 1989).

Symbolic death and rebirth is a prevalent theme in the shaman’s “lower world” (Dobkin de Rios & Winkelman, 1989; Peters, 1989; Winkelman, 1986). Amongst the shamans of western South Australia the neophyte is inserted into a water hole, swallowed by a mythical snake and subsequently ejected in the form of a newborn child (Drury, 1987). Similarly, in Labrador Eskimo shamanism Tongarsoak the Great Spirit purportedly manifests in the guise of an enormous white bear and consumes the candidate (Eliade, 1989). As Campbell (1993: 91) explains, “This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation.”

Whilst descending to the “lower world” the neophyte routinely encounters “obstacles” (e.g., rivers, bridges, mountains) (Desjarlais, 1989; Harner, 1990; Kalweit, 1988; Peters, 1989, 1990). Eliade (1989) holds that aquatic symbolism often fulfils the negative performative function of an “obstacle.” Eliade (1989: 312) contends that the “infernal river” is a classic motif of the “descent to the underworld,” which is “present in nearly all the variants.” Indeed the “Waters of Death” are held to be a prevalent theme amongst, for example, Asiatic, Oceanic, and palaeo-oriental mythologies (Eliade, 1959: 135). For example, the Altaic shaman’s descent to the “lower world” is characterised by seven “subterranean regions,” referred to as “pudak” (i.e., “obstacles”), of which the fifth and the seventh “pudak” incorporate aquatic symbolism (i.e., waves and rivers, respectively) (Eliade, 1989). This is consistent with Walsh’s (1990a: 147) assertion that the “lower world” is “often a place of tests and challenges.”

Walsh (1993: 750) states that “the experiential content of the shamanic journey is . . . consistent with the shaman’s learned cosmology.” Thus, a shamanic

journeying image is, at least in part, a visual mental image that is consistent with the shaman's cosmological framework. An example of shamanic journeying imagery would be Maria Sabina's (the Mazatec shaman) journeying imagery (Wasson et al., 1974). When treating a young man, she asked some basic questions (e.g., "What happened to your foot?": p. 31) and then provided diagnostic answers (e.g., "It isn't a sickness... , it is a blow of fortune that hit him": p. 33). And, as the psychotropic mushrooms both shaman and her client had ingested began to take effect, she launched into her healing journey. For example, "Oh Jesus, clock woman am I, eagle woman am I" (pp. 64–65). "I am going to thunder, I am going to sound. Even below the water, even the sea" (p. 83), "woman lord of the holy clown am I, the mushroom says" (p. 91), "lawyer woman, affairs, Mexican flag" (p. 103), "woman of the whirlpool, in the lake am I" (p. 107), "woman of the star of the Southern Cross am I... , woman of the shooting stars am I, lawyer woman am I, woman of affairs I am, I am going to the sky. Yes, Jesus Christ says, there my paper book is, there my Book is, my clean Book, my good Book" (p. 109). "There is where my prayers are, and where my little nuns are, and I go to the sky" (p. 111).

At the end of the session, Maria Sabina asked the young man, "Has your body become lighter now?" (p. 201) and he answered in the affirmative. However, the healing was not complete and she concluded that her client "probably needed many more" mushrooms (p. 203). Back from "the sky," Maria concluded the session by saying, "We are left only perplexed" (p. 205).

These excerpts qualify as shamanic journeying images because they were a series of images that occurred during a shamanic ceremony, and they reflected Mazatec shamanic cosmology (e.g., the "lower world" of the whirlpool, sea, and lake; the "upper world" of the eagle, shooting stars, and the sky. In contrast, the overlay of Roman Catholic symbolism (Jesus Christ, nuns, and the Book), Mexican folklore (clock woman, holy clown), and politics (lawyer woman, Mexican flag) do not satisfy  $N_2$  and, thus, do not qualify as shamanic journeying images.

### **$N_3$ : $X$ Must Be Consistent With the Purpose of the Shamanic Journey**

Walsh (1995: 37) suggests that the mental images encountered during shamanic journeying are consistent with "the purpose of the specific session." For example, a shaman called Semyon Semyonov describes the following sequence:

... my ancestors made me into a shaman. They set me up like a wooden pole and shot arrows at me until I became unconscious. They cut the flesh off me. They separated my bones and counted them. My flesh they ate raw. When they counted my bones, they found that there was one too many. Had there not been enough bones I could not have become shaman (Ksenofontov, cited in Kalweit, 1988: 106).

It is arguable that the purpose of Semyon Semyonov's journeying session is what Eliade (1989: 59) has referred to as "ritual death and resurrection." Consequently, the entire series of images (e.g., ancestors cutting and eating the shaman's flesh) may be regarded as consistent with the task at hand, thus,

satisfying  $N_3$ . In contrast, if the purpose of a shamanic journeying session was “ritual death and resurrection” (Eliade, 1989: 59) and if the imagery sequence was inconsistent with this purpose (e.g., the shaman traversed a “jungle”), then the imagery would fail to satisfy  $N_3$ .

#### **$N_4$ : The Function of $X$ Must Be Consistent With $X$**

We are using the term “function” to denote the action or activities expected of  $X$  according to a particular shamanic cosmology. It is arguable that  $X$ s perform either literal or symbolic functions. If some  $X$  performs a literal function, then  $X$  functions “in exact accordance with or limited to the primary or explicit meaning of a word” (*Collins Concise Dictionary*, 1999: 854). Consider a Siberian shaman’s description of the features of a journey to the “lower world”:

His soul is taken to the shaman ancestor, and there they show him a kettle full of boiling tar. There are people in it. There are some who are known to the shaman. A single rope is fastened across the kettle and they order him to walk over it. If he succeeds, he will live long. If he falls into the kettle, he might still become a Kam (shaman), but usually they do not survive (Dioszegi, cited in Kalweit, 1988: 231).

The function of the “shaman ancestor” image is to impose tests that the neophyte must pass. This function is consistent with the explicit meaning of the term “shaman ancestor.” That is to say, one literal function of a shaman ancestor is to provide shamanic training. Consequently, the “shaman ancestor” image satisfies  $N_4$ . If, for example, the “shaman ancestor” exhibited the behavior of a court-jester (e.g., juggling red balls for the purpose of entertaining spectators), then this would be inconsistent with the literal function of a shaman ancestor and, thus,  $N_4$ .

In contrast, if some  $X$  performs a symbolic function, then the function of  $X$  is such that it “represents or stands for something else, usually by convention or association” (*Collins Concise Dictionary*, 1999: 1507). One may consider the “rope across the kettle of tar” image from the previous example. This image may be conceptualized as a symbol of hell (Kalweit, 1988), thus, satisfying  $N_4$ . In contrast, if the shaman, for instance, drank from the “kettle of tar” and claimed that his/her thirst had been quenched, then this would be inconsistent with the symbolic function of this image and, thus, would constitute a violation of  $N_4$ .

#### **A Critical Issue**

It might be argued that a necessary condition should be formulated that addresses the ontological foundations of shamanic journeying imagery (e.g., the ontological foundations of a visual mental image,  $X$ , must be  $Y$ ). Ontology may be defined as “the matter of what there is in the world” (Chalmers, 1996: 41); it is concerned with “an overall conception of how things are” (Heil, 1998: 6). The term “ontological foundations” refers to the fundamental nature of the underpinnings of, for instance, a visual mental image. For example, an ontologist



might be concerned with whether the kind of “thing” (i.e., denoted by *Y*) to which a shamanic journeying image is referentially linked is imaginal (i.e., a projection of the shaman’s mental set) or exosomatic (i.e., independent of the shaman’s mind-body complex) (Irwin, 1985; Walsh, 2007).

Walsh (1990b: 89) argues that, “As metaphysicians, shamans tend to be realists.” That is, shamans conceptualize phenomena encountered during, for example, magical flight or “soul” journeying as real, objective, and independent of the shaman’s mind-body state (Walsh, 1989b). For example, in a survey of the ethnographic literature, Noll (1985: 446) states that during a North American Indian vision quest, “a vision was taken to be a real perception: an encounter with an order of reality independent of the perceiver.” Indeed, Peters and Price-Williams (1980: 405) assert that, “Whereas Western psychiatry explains the visions as symbolic of internal processes, the shaman sees them as objective events.” Noll (1985) concludes that an increase in the perspicacity of the shamanic practitioner’s mental imagery is contemporaneous with alterations in one’s psychophysiology, which, in turn, increase one’s certainty that the “upper world” and “lower world” are veridical. Similarly, Harner (1987) suggests that the shaman’s cosmos is not a mental projection, but rather exists independently of the perceiver’s mind. Furthermore, Walsh (1990a) contends that one crucial distinction between Buddhist meditative experiences and shamanic patterns of phenomenal properties is that the shamanic practitioner regards mental imagery as concrete and real, while the Buddhist adept considers imagery to be ephemeral and devoid of any independent reality. It would, of course, be useful to resolve the ontological foundations (i.e., whether *Y* is imaginal or exosomatic) of shamanic journeying imagery using *a priori* or *a posteriori* methods, rather than merely to assume that shamans’ knowledge claims are valid. In this context it may be prudent to consider Mercante’s (under review: 6–7) suggestion that a persuasive argument for considering imagery associated with the Ayahuasca experience (i.e., *miração*, singular; *mirações*, plural) an “involuntary and spontaneous process is that voluntary events rely on memory.” Extrapolating from Farthing’s (1992) discussion of mental imagery to *mirações*, Mercante (under review: 6–7) writes:

If the arrival and dissipation of *mirações* were subject to the command of the individual, it would follow that no “alien” elements (outside a person’s familiar universe) would be present. . . . The idea is that one can only voluntarily manipulate images that are impressed upon the memory through sensation. Not that a person cannot assemble new patterns from recorded sensory data, but he or she cannot manufacture fundamental data beyond the pale of experience. The revelatory qualities of the *miração* would be lost or at least considered illusory if the experience of it were limited to the cache of existing memory.

One may apply Mercante’s argument to shamanic journeying imagery and contend that if shamanic journeying images are immune to voluntarily manipulation, then shamanic journeying images are not constructed from material derived from a peripients’ long-term memory system. Ethnographic data, however, suggest that shamans tend to cultivate a mastery over journeying images (e.g., Noll, 1985), thus indicating—provided one accepts Mercante’s



preceding argument—that shamanic journeying imagery is the result of an epistemological process involving memory recall and superimposition “within” a percipient’s phenomenal space.

Furthermore, it is arguable that even if the “outward appearance” of a shamanic journeying image,  $X$ , is derived from material stored in a percipient’s long-term memory system, this does not necessarily preclude the ontological foundations of  $X$  from being exosomatic. For example, if a shaman encounters a “predatory creature” during a journey to the “lower world”—and the “outward appearance” of this predatory creature is the derivative of an autobiographical memory—it remains possible that the “predatory creature” is merely the manifestation or “personae” of an external entity. As previously stated, Strassman (2001), for instance, has suggested that entities encountered during dimethyltryptamine-induced patterns of phenomenal properties tend to manifest in forms recognisable to the percipient (e.g., “elves,” “aliens,” “angels,” “deceased relatives”) and yet may reside in parallel universes or dark-matter realms.

Walsh (1990b) suggests that we are not currently in a position to prove or disprove the proposition that the ontological status of spirits is transpersonal. Similarly, the ontological status of the referents of journeying phenomena currently resists resolution. Thus, the usefulness of a necessary condition pertaining to the ontological foundations of journeying imagery is hampered by the inability to determine whether  $Y$  denotes “imaginal” or “exosomatic.”

### Scoring With Regard to Shamanic Journeying Image Status

The formulation of  $N_1$ – $N_4$  constitutes a set of criteria that allows one to investigate whether a visual mental image *isn’t* a shamanic journeying image. If the visual mental image fails to satisfy all necessary conditions, then it is falsified and regarded as a nonshamanic image. However, if all the proposed necessary conditions are satisfied, then it doesn’t necessarily follow that the visual mental image is a shamanic journeying image because the conjunction of  $N_1$ – $N_4$  may not constitute a sufficient condition (i.e., there may exist necessary conditions that we have overlooked). One might invoke a dichotomous “yes/no” scoring format with regard to each necessary condition and code “yes” as 1 and “no” as 0. Thus, any score less than 4 would result in the falsification of a visual mental image’s purported shamanic status. Consider a Tamang shaman’s description of his initiatory calling:

... I took my father’s [also a shaman] magical dagger and went to where the three rivers cross [a cemetery]. ... In the cemetery, I saw many evil spirits, some with long crooked fangs, others with no heads and with eyes in the middle of their chests, still others carrying decayed corpses. They attacked me and, before I knew it, they were all over me devouring my body. I was scared to death and, in a last hope, cried for the gods to save me, pleading that I was only a young boy. I drew out my father’s magical dagger to defend myself, but it fell to the ground and struck a rock. This created a spark of light and

everything changed. Suddenly it was daytime and the demons were gone. I was alive! (Peters, 1982: 23)

One may proceed to assess, for example, the “evil spirit” images as follows: The “evil spirits” satisfy  $N_1$  on the grounds that they are integrated with other visual mental images (e.g., a “cemetery,” “decaying corpses,” a “magical dagger,” a “rock”). The “outward appearance” of the visual mental image (e.g., “evil spirits” with “crooked fangs”) is consistent with Tamang shamanic cosmology (i.e., the shaman often encounters predatory creatures), thereby satisfying  $N_2$ . The “evil spirits” satisfy  $N_3$  on the grounds that they appear consistent with the purpose of the journey, which is arguably shamanic death/rebirth. It is noteworthy that the shaman states that the “evil spirits” “attacked me... I was scared to death...” (Peters, 1982: 23). This mental imagery sequence is consistent with the contention that “predatory creatures” such as “evil spirits” perform the symbolic function of representing the shaman’s fear (Kalweit, 1988), thus, satisfying  $N_4$ . Given that the “evil spirits” satisfy  $N_1$ – $N_4$ , a score of 4 is awarded and the purported shamanic journeying status of the visual mental image is not falsified. It may also be observed that when  $N_1$ – $N_4$  are satisfied the journeying imagery experience is arguably more coherent and, thus, more likely to be productive and meaningful for the shaman and his/her community. That is to say, if one or more of the necessary conditions is not satisfied, then the experiential consistency of the journey is compromised. For example, if the purpose of a journeying session is ascension to the “upper world” to communicate with one’s power animal, then being attacked by “evil spirits” in the “lower world” is inconsistent with this purpose and, thus, a contravention of  $N_3$ . Consequently, it might be argued that, given the purpose of the session, being attacked by “evil spirits” detracts from the experiential consistency of the journey.

### Conclusion

It was argued that despite renewed interest in shamanic patterns of phenomenal properties such as journeying imagery, these phenomena are neither well defined nor sufficiently understood. Consequently, we formulated proposed criteria for the necessary conditions for a visual mental image to qualify as a shamanic journeying image. The criteria were validated by demonstrating that they constitute features of visual mental imagery deemed by scholars (and by shamans themselves) to be shamanic. It was contended that, taken as a whole, the criteria are indicative of an experientially consistent journey. A scoring system was also developed that allows one to falsify a visual mental image’s purported shamanic status. Essentially, the aforementioned proposed criteria provide future researchers seeking to examine shamanic journeying imagery with the conceptual tools needed to identify the phenomenon that they are intending to investigate.

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